

**Mayor's column for
The Beacon
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During the first week of April, I, along with 18 other Edmonds delegates, traveled to Hekinan, Japan to celebrate the 20th anniversary of our sister city relationship. Because I was out of town, I missed the City Council meeting of April 1 where the public had the opportunity to comment on possibilities for redevelopment of the Antique Mall and Skippers locations near the waterfront. Since returning, I have read the minutes of the meeting and watched it on channel 21.

After consulting with the Council president, staff and I have some understanding of what type of information the Council would like us to bring back to them for their consideration. It is a detailed enough task that it will take us four to five weeks to put it all together and schedule it for the Council to consider.

I would guess that the current property owners listened to what the public comments were and hopefully can factor them in to whatever they plan to move forward with. I am often stopped on the street and asked questions such as, "How can you let this guy build that?" or, "It looks like so-and-so has City approval to build more condos. How could that happen?" Or some other form of that same general question.

In fact, just the other day I heard a woman talking in the line at the Post Office (that line could be a story by itself) and she was telling someone that, "They're building eight-story buildings on the waterfront."

Let me be very clear on this: as of April 11, 2008, not one building permit has been applied for to do anything at either of those two properties. City staff has nothing to review, approve, or deny as far as an application goes. Nothing has been presented; consequently, there are no plans for eight-story buildings on the waterfront. My guess is that the City Council collectively would never approve of such a thing.

Judging from the comments at the April 1 meeting, it is clear that there are many ideas about what should happen on the two parcels. Whether those ideas meet with the property owners' plans or even the City Council's thoughts remains to be seen. One thing was reinforced though not talked about much, and that is, what currently exists on the sites needs to go. The public who spoke talked of what could happen there; clearly they were ready for a change from what is there today.

The owners could apply for a permit tomorrow and have it approved without any guidance from the City Council if they chose to build under today's existing codes. My guess is that if that were to happen, it would not be in the best interest of Edmonds residents. As is often stated, what is built on that site will be there for our children and our grandchildren. An updated strip mall, which is what we would get under today's codes, would not be a welcome addition to Edmonds' present or future.

Let's look at the other extreme: several eight-story buildings on those two sites. I won't even dignify a discussion of ten-story buildings. In a column earlier this year, I expressed my dismay over the addition of an option from the property owners showing ten-story buildings. While I don't get to vote on any proposal that would come before the Council, I believe they would never approve of such a thing, nor should they.

So, let's go back to the eight-story buildings that I heard about in the Post Office line. I honestly can't imagine that scenario either. Even one of those would stick out (up) like a sore thumb. So where does that leave us?

Well...we could go on and on, as we have been doing for quite some time. We could continue to talk about it, and talk, talk, talk! But I hope not.

It's time for some action. Its time for us to have a look at what the owners would like to build. They must have some ideas. They both have architects, planners, and designers on their teams. Show us some work. Give us something to sink our teeth into. Something that we can look at and say yea or nay to. Don't worry if it's not perfect; we're going to tweak it anyway!

So I beg of you Mr. Dykes and Mr. Gregg, put us out of our misery. Draw something up. We'll be glad to help once you get us started. Besides, we need something new to talk about in that darn Post Office line.